

Prepare the Way

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Preacher: Rev. Dr Marcus Torchon

[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. It's really good to come to be at worship with you on this memorable Sunday, the second Lord's Day of Advent, as together we prepare the way.

And I say thank you to the team that has welcomed us as we came through, and also to my colleague Russell, who has been keeping me a breath of what's going on, how the service is likely to go, and so far it is as planned.

And I thank God that again this morning I don't have to lead the service. Someone, Alex, has been leading for us, and the band has been doing a marvelous job.

Could you put your hand together for the band? They did a good job. They did this morning. Yeah. Now, I'd like you to share with me, this morning you asked me two questions.

I'd like to ask you one question. Is that okay? Okay. I am visiting, and I'm driving around, and I see this building, and on the board you have Christ Church.

[1 : 20] And I'd love to come and worship with you. So give me three things you do that will encourage me to come and be part of this worship experience. Remember, I'm visiting.

Three things you do, or you are, that will encourage me to be part of this fellowship. Here we go. A warm welcome. And what does that mean, a warm welcome in Christ Church? Good coffee. Good coffee.

Fine. There is something to take in, yes? Good coffee in terms of welcome. Anything else in terms of good welcome, wonderful welcome? Say that again.

Friendly faces. Friendly faces are being part of the welcome. We want to know you as we welcome you into the community.

[2 : 24] A smile greets us. I got it this morning as I was parking the car. That's number one. Welcome. We haven't finished yet. Number two.

Home groups. Can you say what that means to Christ Church? Home groups. Small groups of fellowship.

And talking about Jesus. So there is fellowship within, which inhabits small groups scattered across the church, the community.

Are we there so far, yeah? So as soon as I come, you say welcome. And as I get going into the church, immediately the possibility of joining a small group is available.

Am I getting it right? Am I getting it right? Oh, I'm not hearing you. Nevertheless, number three. We get a good welcome.

[3 : 29] We have small groups. And number three is? Loving our community and joining in with the work of God. Joining our community and joining in wherever God is working.

I can see social witness here. I can see outreach here. I can see attending to the community. I can see the community attending to us in many ways.

So is that okay? You want me to stay still? Because I get welcome. I got fellowship.

And I get something about the community. May I ask one more question? Yes. Someone to come and sit in the room and sit alone and also to one prayer.

And I think I can't really want to go. Like, you're welcome. But I don't know. So, you're welcome. Oh, as part of the welcome, someone accompanies you to usher you into your seat and ensures that you are part of the service.

[4 : 45] That's wonderful. You want me to stop there, yeah? Now, the significance of Advent is an invitation to prepare the way as we attend to the reading that you have listened to this morning.

But before we do so, that is, attending to the reading, I'd like to go briefly to how this Holy Bible, the Scriptures, to how it is structured.

There are four main themes, and I'd like to focus on one as we prepare the way. The very first theme of this wonderful book, key theme, is the glory of God's creation in its splendor and perfection.

You find that in Genesis chapters 1 and 2. It was good, God said, after every step of the way in the creation process, God declares it was good.

That was Genesis chapters 1 and 2. We move on to the second theme in the entire Bible as it is structured and recorded here.

[6 : 25] The second theme is evidence of dysfunctionality in God's creation. We have the glorified creation of God in Genesis chapters 1 and 2.

Then now there is evidence of dysfunctionality in God's creation from Genesis chapters 3 to Genesis chapter 11.

This is a mess there. We're killing each other. Dysfunctionality of God's creation and God got to a point, I wonder, I wonder why I created these people.

Canculeble, the Tower of Babel, challenging God. God said, I'm not having it.

And that takes us to the third theme of the Scriptures or the Bible as it is structured here. It is the momentous intervention.

[7 : 40] The momentous intervention starts or is to be within chapters or the books that I'm going to call from Genesis chapter 12, church, to Revelation chapter 20.

It's all about Advent. So the momentous intervention is about God's intervening in the history of humankind, in the history of God's creation to redeem that creation from Genesis chapters 3 to 11 back to Genesis chapters 1 and 2.

That's why we have Advent. God's is a plan. In that redemption plan, which is made manifest in the coming of Jesus Christ, history was split into two.

Do you recall this bit? That is B.C., the B.C. era, and the E.A.D. era, B.C. before Christ, and A.D., the time that comes after the year of our Lord, the year of Christ's birth, or the years or the era that follow birth of Christ, ministry of Christ, Christ, the cross, the cross, the ascension, history was split into two as a result of the momentous intervention of God.

In the fullness of time, Galatians says, God sent his son, born of a woman. Why? There was a mission to redeem the world from, I know it's difficult to remember for some of us, Genesis chapters 3 to 11, back to Genesis chapters 1 and 2, or looking forward to Revelation chapters 21 and 22.

[10 : 12] In the fourth, the fourth theme is God's creation, the glorified nature of God's creation is fulfilled through Christ.

Because in Revelation from chapter 21 onward, there was a new creation. There was a new earth. There is a new heaven. The old have passed away, and behold, all has become new.

The momentous intervention has recreated the world in Christ, by Christ, for Christ. And through Christ. Now, I invite you to reflect on your life BC.

In other words, before Christ came, before the birth of Christ, what kind of life did you have? Or, before the birth of Christ in your own life, what life did you have?

And now, I want you to reflect on the life AD, you have after Christ. The world has changed. Are you changing? Because you have met, encountered, received the gospel of truth.

[11 : 32] So God is saying to you and to me, the monotonous reality of life in terms of, by the way, can you help me remembering, to remember the different seasons of the year?

What season are we in? And what follows? And? And? You sure, yeah? But I learned in England, you can't have all four in one day.

Yeah. I want you to realize what's going on here. We have all the four seasons, every year, we don't miss anyone. Life will be just boring, monotonous, without God's intervention.

So, that is, the chronos of time means little until God intervenes in terms of kairos, k-a-i-r-o-s.

In the Greek terminology, it means God's appointed time, God's own time to do something. So, at the chaotic moment of life, in the fullness of time, God sent his son.

[12 : 49] And that's the momentous intervention in the world. That momentous intervention unites humanity, creation to God in Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

But let's move forward a bit because I'd like to stay at point theme number three. So, God, according to the momentous intervention, had been preparing the way in his son, or God's son, being the way, the truth, and the life.

So, long before John the Baptist was the voice in the wilderness crying out, preparing the way, God had already prepared the way in Jesus Christ.

You find that in Genesis chapter 3, verse 15. While the mess was going on, God said, I have a plan to redeem humanity, to redeem creation, to redeem my beloved glorified world.

So, if God has had a plan, and God's plan is about prosperity, redemption, salvation, and that plan, let's travel with me, takes me to a second point I want you to focus with, to focus on with me, it's defining moment.

[14:31] Wait, let's look at it differently. If you're moving from the momentous intervention, that is too big for me, Mark, break it down. I say, okay, you want me to break it down?

Every time God comes to you in your times of needs and concerns and frustrations, you're experiencing a defining moment.

Jesus comes. It's not just Christ had come. Jesus comes. He comes now to those who are suffering. and his intervention, I mean, Jesus' intervention in our suffering, in our frustration, is a defining moment, which is a moment you claim or God makes real to you in the momentous intervention.

at creation, we had a moment of orientation. When this creation was infected by sin, we had a moment of disorientation.

And this current moment with Advent, Christ is ushering a moment of reorientation to this world and that moment of reorientation, that new moment of Advent is being made real, is being made real to you in your concerns about how to live.

[16:10] Let's get some examples across. Do you recall when you first met the Lord? Do you recall that? Oh, have you ever met the Lord?

That was a defining moment. Christ didn't just come, okay, he's come for the Chinese. He's come for the Americans. He's come for the Europeans. He's come for you individually.

And that is the momentous intervention becoming your individual reality when Jesus Christ comes into your life and says, there is room in my heart for you, Lord.

That's a defining moment for you. When I became a child of God, I would have been quite young, 14. I never looked back.

that was a defining moment in my life. When I had a critical accident, having studied quite well as a young man, 24, 25, moving on, I had a critical accident.

[17:20] I love riding back in those old good days as a young man. I had a critical accident as a Methodist local preacher. and the message was clear.

When are you going to stand in the pulpit and preach my word and be a missionary? I didn't understand. In that critical and terrible accident, there was a defining moment.

Christ came and rescued me. Have you ever had a defining moment, an occasion when your life has changed forever?

Take a moment to remember. And that defining moment is an element in terms of God's momentous intervention cascades into your little world, my little world.

Mary Magdalene approached the tomb. All that she knew became of a different reality when Jesus Christ said, woman, whom are you looking for?

[18:35] She said, I'm looking for Jesus of Nazareth. You and the gardener, where have you put him? And what did Jesus say? He moved from woman to Mary.

That was a defining moment in Mary's life. from that time, Mary couldn't be held back. Even the great Peter and John couldn't believe that woman.

Have you ever had a defining moment? Maybe defining moment in terms of healing. Defining moment in terms of a new start.

Defining moment in terms of this church being what it is today. There was a time you were not what you are. There have been defining moments in this church. And again, I repeat, every defining moment is Advent coming to you in Christ.

It's Christ being born in you. We encounter Christ in small measures as we say to him. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[19:43] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. we prepare our way to meet the Lord, to welcome him into our hearts, I want you to remember something. As Advent people, we are called to be adventurous. Now let's start from the beginning. There is a momentous intervention, all right? It's all over the world. But God has tailored, customized that momentous orientation to my own world, is mine when I experience a very significant moment in my life. Having received that, having been an Advent person or Advent people that we are, God is saying, I'm not having you sitting here in Christ's church, you know. You must be adventurous.

Oh. If you look at what John the Baptist did, if you continue to read, his job was to prepare the way. So we are now replacing John the Baptist to enable the current community to prepare the way for the second coming of Christ. We have a, our job is well, well outlined. I ask you from the beginning, at the beginning rather, give me three things that you do well in this church. Would you like to believe this is part of your adventure? It's not easy to welcome someone. You don't know what the person has come for.

[22 : 07] You don't know what is driving this person. You don't know whether if you say good morning, the person will say, good morning. Or you don't know. It's an adventure there.

In some cases, if you say to someone, where are you from, the person takes it the wrong way, then you're in trouble. Are you with me?

You smile, and the person should smile. But the person doesn't smile because the person is going through a turmoil. Inside of that person, there is a war. He comes, she comes, they come to church, they can't sing, because the moment of disorientation is real. They come to see, to experience an advent. Sometimes the welcome process can take time. Be patient with one another.

And you mentioned our fellowships and your work in the community. But I'd like you to remember this as I end, because I need to end, yeah? Is that okay? Because otherwise you will not have me back.

It's all right. But I need to end by reminding you that God has you, has all of us here as advent people to be adventurous in this world. Let the sick find comfort and care within the context of the church. Let those who are seeking justice, let those who are seeking justice find it within our fellowship, within our adventurous initiatives. Let those who are in need of peace find us as channels of peace.

[23 : 57] But you know, some of us, we do not want to experience the adventure of advent.

When God said to Moses, I'm going to send you back to Egypt, you're going to be there at vent. Be adventurous among your people. Redeem them. Bring them out of Egypt. What did Moses say? I don't speak too well, you know. I don't think I'm the right person.

God said, I'm not having it, Moses. I'll give you a one. You go in anyhow. In terms of Isaiah, Isaiah had a message to be adventurous. In the temple, a glorious temple like yours, he saw what he couldn't believe. God seated on the throne. Things were majestic.

And all of a sudden, you know what he said? Oh, I sit among people whose lips are unclean. I myself, my lips are unclean. In other words, I'm not going anywhere with this message. God said, I'm not having it, it's Isaiah. God used a cherubim to actually burn the unclipped, to remove, to declutter the space that his heart was holding things that were not of him. And all of a sudden, the lips, the heart of Isaiah was ready to go. And what did he say? When God, the council of heaven said, whom shall I send? What did he say? Here I am, Lord. Send me. At the end of Jesus' ministry, he called the disciples in Galilee, said to them, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. They all, and Christ ascended. They all stood up there, gazing. An angel of the Lord turned up and said, guys, you can't be standing up here gazing. There is work for you in the valley. Get going. Sometimes as adventurous people, we need a push. We need Christ to come back again and again and again and again to remind us of the significance of Advent. The defining moment we have experienced, the adventurous reality we need to engage in. Maybe I'm here to remind you of what you are doing.

[26 : 43] You know what it is. Continue to be adventurous in this community, in this church. I, in ending, I remember having heard a preacher give, it's an illustration of someone struggling to know what to do because the situation was such that he couldn't see any defining moment and he didn't know what to do. He had a small business, it was a hardware business and the business was doing well as a church person, a church leader. And all of a sudden, someone from somewhere turned up

and said, well, I need to buy your business because my future is really shaky unless I have something, a private business to go with. But the man said, no, I cannot sell you my business. This is my livelihood. He said, I hear what you're saying. He offered as much money as possible. The man said, no. So what the rich man did was to buy a property next to that lovely guy, lovely guy's business and then he established another hardware there. Sophisticated. You can't buy online. Everything was doing well. Three months later, he bought another property next on the right side of that building. And imagine what's going on now. The building of the lovely child of God was going down and down and down and down. He got to a point where he said, Lord, why am I in this faith? I can't feed my children. Things are getting tough. I need a breakthrough right now. I need to hear from you.

And said, okay, you will experience an Advent moment, a defining moment. And when you experience that, be adventurous in your business. You got a revelation from God now. Let me see if I can picture it that way. Remember, there is a hardware on the left side, yeah? There is another hardware on the right side and all, both of them are doing well. And the lovely man of God, he's at where we're in the middle, was in the middle. Things were really a bit dark there. He got a revelation from God to say, on top of your building there, put main entrance.

So over here, he put main entrance and he painted the building, his own building, in the same color with the other two. Are you there with me? His defining moment came and he said to the Lord, God, now maybe I was a bit stingy with you. I'll give you more of my time, more of my money, more of my resources, more of my expertise, more of my knowledge, the riches of God in me.

I'm prepared to share because I need to be more adventurous. You have established for me a defining moment. What was the moment about? Can we say it together? Main entrance, your life, may it be the main entrance for Jesus' intervention. Amen.